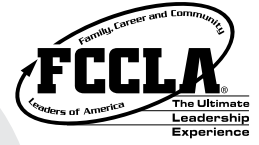


# Leading Questions



Dynamic leaders guide their peers to positive choices by helping them think through issues. Here are some strategies for leading group discussions to positive conclusions.

## **Begin with general conclusions.**

Open a discussion with general observations. Ask participants, "What did you think?" or "What was going through your mind when you saw that?" Answers to these questions can give you clues about where people are in their thinking about the issue. At times, you may get no response, which just means you need to follow up with a more specific question.

## **Try to stay as neutral as possible... in the beginning.**

A discussion requires bringing out other people's ideas. As you begin a group discussion, it might be best if your personal opinions, and even your knowledge of the topic, be kept "under wraps." Instead, try to get the group to debate and discuss. After a time, though, you need to make sure the learning objective is understood by everyone, even if that means saying it in clear terms such as, "What we need to understand about this topic is...."

## **Let other people "disagree."**

If someone makes a statement that you think is incorrect, or that you think other members of the group won't agree with, follow up by asking the rest of the group, "what do people think about what Mike just said?" Make sure people don't "attack" others, but let them disagree.

## **Ask the person to "go further."**

Give participants the opportunity to expand on any answer they give. After a person makes a comment, don't be afraid to say, "can you go further with that?" or "can you explain what you mean?"

## **If you have a goal in mind, steer people toward that goal.**

Whenever you begin a discussion, have in mind some key points you want others to understand. By knowing these key points, you can often "steer" discussion so that the group "figures them out" for themselves. It is fine if the group makes other comments or observations that don't apply to these main points. Eventually, steer them back to your key points.

## **Try to put some closure on the discussion.**

Wrap up the discussion before you move on to another topic or activity. It's a good idea to review the main points as a way to help participants remember the learning objectives.

**Today's  
Challenge:  
Introduce and  
lead discussion  
about a topic  
your team  
faces.**



Source: Adapted with permission from "Tips for Trainers," The Peer Educator, September 1998. (Published by The BACCHUS & GAMMA Peer Education Network, Denver, CO.)